

Withdrawal

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Summary: Kitty tries to deal with her break-up with Pete, and finally realizes what she really wants.

Withdrawal

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Okay, I know it's not a new idea, but, if you ask me, you can't have too many Pete 'n' Kitty stories. :) This one is fluffy, short, and totally devoid of any literary merit. Please send feedback and tell me what you think! My email address is kassia06@yahoo.com.

Enjoy!

** Withdrawal **

"Kitty, please stop suckin' your hair. It makes it stick together."

Kitty sheepishly removed the lock from her mouth and pushed it behind her ear. Sucking on her hair was a nervous habit of childhood. She thought she had broken it.

Rogue's head was reflected next to hers in the mirror, and Kitty could see the distressed look on the other X-woman's face. "It's pretty bad, Ah'm afraid."

"But salvageable?" Kitty asked hopefully.

"Too early too tell." Rogue picked up a pair of scissors, and ruthlessly clipped off a few locks of Kitty's hair. She tossed the singed bits aside. "Ah still don't understand how you caught it on fire."

"Sat too close to Gambit when he was lighting a cigarette. I didn't

know kinetic bursts could really set _fire_ to things."

Rogue merely shook her head and finished brushing out Kitty's hair. "Ah'm afraid we're gonna hafta cut it off, Kit."

"Bloody hell," Kitty replied, and submitted grudgingly to Rogue cutting her hair.

Kitty sat down to dinner sporting a new and more convenient shoulder length cut. She was seated between Gambit and Peter. Gambit grinned at her apologetically, and Peter just smiled blankly and passed her the green beans. Kurt was the only one to notice her new hair cut, and compliment her on it. Of course, she could hardly expect more than that. Most physical changes seemed to go unnoticed in the X-Mansion.

The smell of cigarette smoke still hung around Gambit. For that matter, Logan smelled like cigar. Gambit had put out her hair-fire quickly, but not before Logan had lit his cigar with it. Storm sniffed the air and wrinkled her nose in disgust.

"Katya," Colossus said.

"Yes?"

"Perhaps, after dinner, you would like to hike through the forest with me?"

"Sounds great." Kitty smiled briefly, and turned her head back the other way. Cigarette. The smell was vaguely soothing, actually. Familiar, like the smell of the perfume your mother used to wear.

"See, _cherie_, this is how you get caught on fire."

Kitty started, and realized that she was leaning a little towards Gambit, head caulked and hair brushing his arm. Embarrassed, she sat up straighter and returned to her food.

"The forest, it is so refreshing, so reassuring. You feel so safe, so away from the daily turmoil of life." Kitty merely nodded in reply, so he continued. "Katya, I am worried about you. Lately, you've seemed... withdrawn."

Kitty didn't answer for a moment._ Something's all wrong, and I'm not even sure what it is. I just know that there's some piece of me changed, some piece of me that no longer fits with the rest..._ But for some reason she couldn't tell him that. "I suppose it's coming back here..." she said, by way of evading the question. "The change is so abrupt, and things can't be like they were when I was last here. I need some time to adapt, I guess."

"I am your friend, you know," he said gently. "You can confide in me."

"Peter, when have I ever..." She cut herself off before she could say

'kept anything from you' and finished, "...implied anything to the contrary? I know you care about me, but there's no reason to worry." She smiled reassuringly at him. "Really." _Colossus, Peter, Piotr, my forever friend, I am lying through my teeth. Something is very wrong._

Peter said no more and they walked on in silence.

I am bored out of my mind.

Kitty had never been a compulsive channel surfer, content either to leave the TV alone and go do something constructive, or to settle on one mediocre show, instead of spending fruitless hours searching for that magical Perfect Channel that many spent their lives questing for in vain.

That night, though, her fingers twitched, pressing buttons rapidly, until she reached the point where she didn't even wait long enough to see what was on the channel. _This is ridiculous._

She rose and went to scan the well-stocked bookshelves of the mansion. There was sure to be something for every taste. Kitty wanted something light to distract her. At last she found a worn Regency romance wedged between a collection of some Italian lady's letters, and a book on learning Gaelic. It looked fairly diverting, and she settled down on the couch.

It was about five minutes before, restless, she flipped ahead, went and read the last page, and decided she didn't want to read it after all. _And they lived happily ever after in marital bliss. What a surprise._

So maybe a book about a couple who ended up being insanely happy was not good for her mood. She wasn't sure why; she had no _reason_ to be particularly unhappy. Yeah, the world feared and hated her, but it was taking a short sabbatical from actively attacking her, and that was a nice change. In fact, she told herself firmly, she should have no objection to fictional characters being happy.

She began to pace restlessly. She remembered reading somewhere that children of divorced parents were twice as likely to get divorced themselves, and usually had more trouble with maintaining a relationship. Kitty was always quick to defy statistics and laugh in the face of suppositions, but now, here alone at night, the possibility that her parent's divorce doomed her unhappy relationships seemed extremely daunting.

This isn't about relationships;_ it's about a particular relationship and you know it._ And then a tiny, weak voice whispered, _You need Pete._

No! Kitty Pryde, though she adored her friends, had never been dependent on anything or anyone except herself. She was not going to be weak. She didn't need him.

But you want him. Very much.

Perhaps she had grown too dependent on Pete, she thought sadly. She

would just have to fight it out; she could do it. Pete was just an addiction; she had loved him, perhaps, a little, but she could get past him. Maybe even be better without him.

What about codependency? Was that so bad? If he needed her as much as she needed him, then it wouldn't be weakness on her part, it would be... be...

Annoyed at herself for the thoughts, she stalked over to the mantelpiece, and, with a quick, angry movement, knocked the Chinese vase that sat there off. It hit the ground with a satisfying crash, and shattered.

"Katya!" a familiar voice said from the doorway. She wheeled around to see the hulking Russian in the doorway. Fortunate there was only one light in the room, and he couldn't see her guilty look. "What happened?"

"Just releasing some pent-up rage," she said lightly. His gaze told her that her assumed cheerfulness didn't fool him at all. She glanced at the floor. "I hope that wasn't an antique or anything." She began to kneel and collect the pieces, but Peter came to her side and caught her hands. She fervently hoped that she didn't look too much like a deer caught in the headlights.

"It's very brave of you to hide your feelings," he said, "but you don't have to be brave. You've been hurt very much- he hurt you very much." She shook her head slightly, not trusting herself to speak, and he continued, "You will get over him, but it will take awhile." He drew her closer. "But, please, believe you can trust me with whatever confidences you have, whatever pains."
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She was embarrassed by the speech, but touched, too, and hugged her friend tightly. "Thank you. I know."

For a moment, he seemed a bit surprised his speech had had such an effect, but at last he returned the embrace. Rather guiltily, she wished that she was in someone else's arms, and that the sentence Peter had just spoken had been uttered in a very different accent.

"Ow!" exclaimed Nightcrawler, walking into the room. He paused, and placed an arm on the wall to balance himself as he leaned over and removed a shard of pottery from his foot.

"Sorry about that," said Kitty, who had just finished breakfast and was about to go upstairs to work on her computer. "Knocked over a vase yesterday. I think I might have missed a few pieces when I was cleaning up."

"Yes, you might have, Katzchen," Kurt agreed blandly, laying the shard on the mantelpiece. "I came to ask you if you wanted to come with Jean, Scott, and me. We're going into town to pick up a few things."

"No thanks. I'm going to work on my computer."

Kurt eyed her dubiously. "Are you sure? You know, Katzchen, recently you've seemed very, ah..."

"Withdrawn?" Kitty offered, recalling her conversation with Colossus.

"Yes."

"It's nice of you to be concerned, Kurt, but I'm fine." She shuffled through a list of possible additions to this sentence, _Just have a bit of a headache, I'm just tired, Just depressed because of the weather._ Of course, it was sunny, and all the possibilities seemed superficial anyway, so she added nothing, and stood there with a fixed smile.

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Kurt nodded, though he still looked doubtful, and withdrew.

She had been hoping, just a little, that once she admitted her problem to herself it would vanish, but it refused to. That wasn't surprising. Since when had X-Men ever been allowed to overcome their angsty-ness?

It was even worse when, during the course of the day, Rogue and Gambit had gotten into a fight which had, somehow, ended in Remy falling of the roof, and Kitty got a spam email from Candy Cane, Slut of the Year, and a very strange one about how mutant slugs would soon take over the world, and then a genuinely horrible B-Movie involving both aliens _and_ vampires was found on one of the mansion's zillion channels, and there was absolutely _no_ one to laugh at it all with Kitty. Somehow, alien-vampire movies were just a helluva lot funnier when their was a cynical Brit commenting on them at your side.

But she didn't love Pete, didn't need Pete, and, soon, wouldn't even want Pete. She would make sure of that.

Colossus just looked at the vampire-alien movie, shook his head, and changed the channel.

Kitty sighed and bit one of her last surviving nails. She adored her friends, and Colossus especially, but she had to admit that, sometimes, Peter was about as fun as a barrel of dead monkeys.

It was 2 AM, and she still couldn't sleep. The past few days since her conversation with Peter had been nerve-wracking in their sameness, and now, when she did fall asleep, she was prone to feverish tossing and turning. Sleeping was more tiring than wakefulness, in fact. The bed seemed too empty, anyway. The only good think that had come from all of this was that she had lost some weight, but, though she knew that she had way too many physical short-comings, her weight had never been much of a problem. So the advantage wasn't that advantageous.

It would be later in the morning for Pete. She could call him.

No you can't.

What could she say, after all? She hadn't allowed herself to practice all her speeches, whether angry, apologetic, or haughty, that she had

been inclined to think up. She had pushed her troubles right down into her feet, so she was walking on them, just like Marge Simpson had said. Of course, perhaps an animated character with blue hair three feet high wasn't the best role model, but that wasn't important.

Now, though, she let her mind wander to what she would say, if she called him right now. Apologetic first came to mind, but damned if she would go crawling back.

A simple, I've been thinking of you? I just need to talk... about what happened. I need some closure. True enough. What the hell happened between us?

She was overcome by an unexpected bout of resolution, and begin searching for the phone number she knew she had somewhere. She found it at last in, appropriately enough, her address book, and phased out to walk quietly to the nearest phone.

At that moment, she was sure it was the scariest thing she had ever done, but she was certainly no coward. Taking a deep breath, she dialed. And waited.

Answering machine.

Go figure.

She didn't leave a message. She might be brave but she could hardly be expected to be frickin' fearless.

More comfortable with the idea now, she tried calling twice the next day. Answering machine both times.

By now, all the X-Men were watching her curiously, if covertly. She supposed she did look a bit haggard lately, but, she assured them, it'd pass. Fortunately, she didn't look alarming enough for them to disagree with her, or insist she get help.

It became a ritual, almost obsessive-compulsive. The day after, she called every three hours. Finally, she had to admit to herself that she didn't want closure, she wanted the relationship back. Answer the damn phone you bloody git!

Peter passed by about the ninth time she called. He regarded her curiously.

"Who are you calling?"

A few hours earlier, she might have felt compelled to make up some story. But she didn't feel like straining her imagination. "I'm ordering pizza," she snapped, and turned back to the phone.

Now, just when she had decided she didn't want to move on, she was going to have to. Maybe Pete had caller ID or something, and just didn't pick up the phone when he saw it was her.

Kitty sat on the back steps, wonderfully alone, and grateful for it- there was only one person in the world she wanted to keep her company that night, and he didn't want to keep her company. So she just sat there, gazing at the night sky. She didn't think she had ever spent such a pleasant, uneventful week so miserably. She had to stop this; she was acting just like a stereotypical female, pining over her ex-boyfriend. Now, if Pete had been acting the same way, it would have been all right, but he didn't seem to be doing much pining if he wasn't answering her calls. Probably thought he was well rid of her.

The back door opened, and Kitty turned, prepared to ward off another friend wanting to 'talk about it'.

Whatever words she might have said died before they passed her lips. Instead, a single breathy, "Pete?"

His eyes were feverish- though perhaps that was her overactive imagination-, and his whole appearance dishevelled, but he managed to say, sounding reasonably like his usual irascible self, "I _would've_ been here earlier, but my bloody plane was delayed, and then- well, have you ever tried renting a car in New York City?"

"No," she choked out. "Most of my travel seems to be by Blackbird."

"Well, you're damned lucky. I could've composed a full symphony in the time it took me to get a car."

Kitty sincerely doubted he could have, and not due to lack of time, but that was hardly a consideration at the moment. Speeches, she vaguely recalled. All sorts of things she needed to say to him. But she didn't know what... Her confusion made her angry, and she was about to break into a _Who the hell do you think you are, mister?!?_ speech, when he cut her short by dropping to his knees beside her.

For a mad moment she thought he was going to propose, but, better yet, he said, "Dammit, can't remember a thing I was going to say, so I'll just go with the Cliff's Notes. I was a bloody fool. Forgive me, _please_, Kit, I love you."

It was a blunt, graceless apology, and the most beautiful one she had heard in her life. He looked at her, his gaze unwavering, if pained, awaiting her answer. He wasn't breathing, she noticed with satisfaction. At last she answered, extravagant speeches forgotten. It was so simple, after all. "I love you, too."

He scooped her up and kissed her like she might disappear at any moment. He smelled wonderful, like tobacco and alcohol, the latter of which had hopefully been acquired on the plane- it would be unforgivable if it turned out that her lover, who seemed to have been in such a hurry to reach her, had stopped for a few drinks.

Yeah, she could do without him. But she'd sure as hell prefer not to. He was her addiction, and dammit if she wasn't going to give in to temptation.

Colossus was standing in the hall, as a few well-chosen words on Logan's part had prevented him from giving in to his initial murderous impulse. Kitty and Wisdom were watching some horrible movie on TV, and occasionally Peter heard a chuckle escape Kitty.

Logan, walking by, paused, and lit a cigar with annoying nonchalance. "If anyone gets to kill him, it'll be Kitty, got it?" he said to Peter.

Colossus, wrestling with chivalrous and very un-chivalrous desires, shook his head. "You are her friend, Logan. How can you let her be hurt again?"

"You're a good man, but for God's sake don't be an idiot. Kitty's a big girl. She knows what she wants." Peter could almost hear the additional, _and it's not you,_ in his tone.

Peter clenched and unclenched his fists. "But I..."

Logan gave him an indifferent shrug, and wandered off. Another musical laugh from Kitty, accompanied by a throaty chuckle. After a moment of inner debate, Peter followed Logan's example, leaving Kitty to her lover.

End
file.